

A Better Way

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Study

Practice-Oriented Spirituality

Unleashing the Power of Conscious Commitment

BY GREG MACKIE

As Course students, we often regard ourselves as nonconformists who have freed ourselves from the influence of that illusory world out there. Yet I suspect that we are influenced by that world far more than we realize. Our spiritual journey is shaped to a large degree by social factors so pervasive that we may not even realize they are there. If this is true, then learning more about these factors offers us a real practical benefit: it can free us from their hidden influence and enable us to choose more consciously how to walk our path.

Along these lines, I recently read a fascinating book by sociologist Robert Wuthnow, whom renowned scholar of religion Harvey Cox has called “the most informed and insightful commentator on religion in America today.”¹ Wuthnow’s book, entitled *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s*, combines historical analysis with statistical surveys

and in-depth interviews to track the trends in American spirituality in the last fifty years. What’s more, he advocates a direction for the future. He champions a way of spiritual life he calls *practice-oriented spirituality*, claiming that it offers practical benefits no other form of spirituality can match. If he is right, then this direction may be one we want to take, if we haven’t already.

I believe Wuthnow is right: practice-oriented spirituality holds out the greatest promise for bringing about deep spiritual transformation. In this article, then, we will take a journey through the trends Wuthnow describes, with practice-oriented spirituality as our destination. Along the way, I invite you to reflect on how your own spiritual path may have been influenced—or is currently influenced—by these trends. In the end, I hope to show that practice-oriented spirituality is not only the wave of the future, but also the way of the Course.



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See page 11

In my view, embracing the Course as practice-oriented spirituality offers huge benefits because it unleashes the power of *conscious commitment*, the key to success in every endeavor, including the spiritual path. It is thus the key to successfully taking hold of the glorious promises of the Course—the gateway to experiencing all that this marvelous spiritual path has to offer.

THREE ALTERNATIVES: DWELLING, SEEKING, PRACTICE

In *After Heaven*, Wuthnow traces a progression in American spiritual life that echoes many of our own spiritual journeys: from *dwelling-oriented spirituality* to *seeking-oriented spirituality*. He then goes on to present *practice-oriented spirituality*

Continued on page 4

“Everyone eventually begins to recognize, however dimly, that there must be a better way.”

—Text, Chapter 2, Section III

A Better Way

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From the Editor

Our big news here is that my new book, *Path of Light*, is out, at last! We had a festive book launch for it here in Sedona, at the local Creative Life Center, where I spoke and signed books and we all had refreshments. About fifty people joined us, many of them having read about it in the local papers. As of this writing, the book has just hit the bookstores, but the advance orders have been more than we expected, and bookstore chains, including Borders and Barnes & Noble, have ordered large amounts. We also have an agreement with a foreign rights agent, whose job is to sell the book to publishers abroad. We have begun receiving wonderful feedback on *Path of Light*, some of which you can read at www.circlepublishing.com in the "Reader comments" section.

The other big news is that the copyright on *A Course in Miracles* is now gone (though the copyright on the Clarification of Terms is still intact). This is a major development not only for Course students and teachers everywhere, but also for the Circle (see my opinion piece entitled "And Now It Belongs to the World" on p. 10). We have been working within the bounds of a mediated agreement with the Foundation for *A Course in Miracles* since April of 2000. This agreement put limits on the amount we could quote from the Course and also added several steps to our publication process, making publishing more time-consuming. Now, however, we have confirmed with FACIM that that agreement is nullified. Therefore, we, like the rest of the world, can quote from the Course as much as we want. This raises a number of questions for us, all of which boil down to this one: What will we do with our newfound freedom? Apart from reprinting the *Workbook Companion* series, we do not yet know the answer to that question, but, as they say, watch this space.



WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT SAYS

A Course in Miracles is a spiritual path. Its purpose is to train us to work miracles—to accept and extend to others the shifts in perception that awaken us to God. It consists of three volumes, which signify the three aspects of its program:

- ◆ *Text*: Through studying the teaching, the Course's thought system first enters our minds.
- ◆ *Workbook for Students*: Through doing the practice, the Course's thought system penetrates more and more deeply into our minds.
- ◆ *Manual for Teachers*: Through extending our healed perception to others, the Course's thought system receives its final reinforcement and becomes the only thing in our minds.

The Course's message is that the source of our suffering is not the world's mistreatment of us, but rather our egocentric attack on the world. This attack convinces us that we have defiled our nature beyond repair, that we are irredeemably guilty. Yet the Course says true reality cannot be defiled; it is a realm of pure, changeless, unified spirit. This realization allows us to forgive the world's apparent mistreatment of us by recognizing that it did not actually occur. And as we see this forgiveness come forth from us—see that we are capable of something genuinely loving and egoless—we gradually realize that we never defiled ourselves. Thus we awaken to the untouched innocence of our true nature.

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as an alternative to both dwelling and seeking. (I will often use the shorthand terms “dwelling,” “seeking,” and “practice” to refer to these three alternatives.) These alternatives have been part of every spiritual tradition, and represent different ways of living the spiritual life.² They are not mutually exclusive, but rather differ in their emphasis, as the word “oriented” suggests.

Let’s take a closer look at all three alternatives. Wuthnow’s account is richly detailed, and my brief summary will not do it justice. My intent is simply to capture the essence of each alternative.

DWELLING-ORIENTED SPIRITUALITY

The central image of dwelling-oriented spirituality is the spiritual home. Emphasized in times of relative stability, this form of spirituality was dominant for most of America’s history through the 1950s. Wuthnow describes its essence as follows:

A spirituality of dwelling emphasizes *habitation*: God occupies a definite place in the universe and creates a sacred space where humans too can dwell; to inhabit sacred space is to know its territory and to feel secure. (3-4)³

Dwelling in the traditional religious institution

Dwelling-oriented spirituality is essentially that of traditional religion⁴—or, as a well-known hymn puts it, “that old-time religion.” The spiritual life is rooted in lifelong membership in a church or other religious institution; this form of spirituality hearkens back to an earlier time, when most people “were cradle-to-grave members of their particular

traditions” (2). Here, living a spiritual life boils down to “dwelling” in your spiritual home: going to religious services, performing the rites, following the rules, and filling your expected role in the community. This, of course, is the spirituality many of us grew up with.

Where do you stand in relation to dwelling-oriented spirituality?

Wuthnow says dwelling-oriented spirituality has fallen out of favor, because it simply doesn’t meet people’s needs the way it used to. True, some do feel nurtured by the dwelling-oriented faith they grew up in. Dwelling has genuine strengths, the primary one being the security of feeling at home. Wuthnow, quoting Ann Truitt, calls this security “‘the lighthearted feeling of being in a litter’ of kittens” (5).

Yet we’re all familiar with the downside:

Dwelling-oriented spirituality is essentially “that old-time religion.”

a secure home can easily become a prison. Narrowly defined sacred space doesn’t allow us to move and grow and adapt to changing times. Many people regard the religion they grew up in as shallow and superficial, “a kind of formulaic religiosity” (40) in which being “religious” meant doing what the institution told you without question. A woman with a Catholic-Baptist background sums up the feeling: “I was afraid to move, afraid to explore. I felt doomed, helpless, powerless” (55).

Think for a moment about where you stand in relation to dwelling-oriented spirituality. Consider the following questions:

- ◆ When you think of traditional religion, are the feelings it brings up more like the warm security of being in a litter of kittens, or like

doom, helplessness, and powerlessness?

- ◆ When you imagine the traditional religious way of life, do you see believers going through a profoundly transformative process of spiritual awakening, or do you see them going through the motions in a rote, spiritually deadening way?
- ◆ When you encounter adherents of traditional religion—for instance, those who liked the movie *The Passion of the Christ*—is your reaction mostly positive, or negative?

I’d be willing to bet that your answers were mainly on the negative side. Indeed, my impression is that many if not most Course students are refugees from dwelling-oriented spirituality. I didn’t come from that old-time religion, but I’ve heard the horror

stories of those who have. In general, the Course community has a dim view of anything that smacks of traditional religion—a view reflected, for instance, in the negative reaction toward the idea of Course-based churches. I even read something recently by a Course student who dislikes the Second Edition’s numbering system because “the numbers for chapter and verse give the Course a dismayingly ecclesiastical flavor.” The upshot is that by and large, we Course students have, like the culture around us, rejected dwelling-oriented spirituality as too rigid, too constraining, and too shallow to meet our spiritual needs.

SEEKING-ORIENTED SPIRITUALITY

The central image of seeking-oriented spirituality is the spiritual journey.

Emphasized in more turbulent times, it rose to the fore during the tumultuous changes of the 1960s, and has remained dominant to this day. Wuthnow describes its essence this way:

A spirituality of seeking emphasizes *negotiation*: individuals search for sacred moments that reinforce their conviction that the divine exists, but these moments are fleeting; rather than knowing the territory, people explore new spiritual vistas. (4)

Seeking in the spiritual marketplace

If dwelling-oriented spirituality is that old-time religion, seeking-oriented spirituality is the New Age smorgasbord.⁵ The spiritual life is rooted in an ongoing search for experiences of the divine in a diverse spiritual marketplace. Churches and other religious institutions are still a viable option, but few people are cradle-to-grave members. Instead, they switch churches frequently, seeing their chosen church as not so much a home, but rather “a supplier of spiritual goods and services” (15). Here, living a spiritual life generally means reading lots of spiritual books, going to workshops and retreats, attending support groups, visiting spiritual teachers and healers, and anything else that contributes to our inner journey. Sound familiar? For most of us, this is what being spiritual is all about.

Where do you stand in relation to seeking-oriented spirituality?

Wuthnow says that seeking-oriented spirituality is *the* spirituality of today, and it is easy to see why. Its great strength is that it frees us from the prison of dwelling. It allows us to explore, to build a flexible spiritual life that can help us cope with these crazy times. As so many of us have discovered, it can be exhilarating and even life-saving to break free from a repressive spiri-

tual home and “explore new spiritual vistas.” The Catholic-Baptist I quoted earlier did just that, and describes her experience this way:

I somehow felt *freer*. I felt as if I had more control over my own life. I felt released from the shackles. I still couldn't quite get a grasp on my life, but I was free of the angry God and hypocritical church experiences of my childhood. (55-56)

Think for a moment about where you stand in relation to seeking-oriented spirituality. Consider the following questions:

If dwelling-oriented spirituality is that old-time religion, seeking-oriented spirituality is the New Age smorgasbord.

- ◆ Do you like the idea of seeking for spiritual sustenance from a variety of sources instead of just one source?
- ◆ Do you like the idea that life is a journey, not a destination?
- ◆ When you encounter “alternative” spiritual seekers—for instance, those who liked the movie *What the #\$%! Do We Know?*—is your reaction mostly positive, or negative?

I suspect this time your answers were more positive. Indeed, seeking-oriented spirituality is for most of us a huge step up from dwelling. Yet it, too, has its downside. The freedom of leaving a repressive spiritual home can easily lead to spiritual homelessness. Seeking in itself is not the problem; on the contrary, it is a necessary part of spiritual growth. The problem arises when seeking becomes an end in itself, rather than a means to reach a destination. If we believe that life is only a journey and never a destination, then “the height of

spiritual existence becomes the process of journeying, seeking, perceiving, and experiencing” (149). Ironically, this can become just as shallow and superficial as the repressive home we left behind. Constantly shifting from one thing to another is, to use a popular image, like digging many shallow wells instead of one deep one. In short, “A spirituality of seeking...results in a transient spiritual existence characterized more often by dabbling than by depth” (168).

I think seeking-oriented spirituality is the spirituality of most Course students. We have absorbed the influence of the surrounding culture well. And for those who have not yet determined whether the Course is their path, this is perfectly appro-

priate. I dabbled in the Course for years, while simultaneously exploring everything from Raja Yoga to Zen Buddhism to the Twelve Steps to New Thought. This was rewarding for a time, but eventually lost its appeal. It was like dating one woman after another, without ever entering into a committed relationship. So, eventually, I committed to the Course as my path—probably the single most important decision of my life.

Once this commitment is made, everything changes. Once we have entered a committed relationship, continuing to play the field causes nothing but problems. Yet my impression is that even those who regard the Course as their path tend to be simultaneously in the seeking mode. You might want to ask yourself where you stand in this regard. If you believe the Course is your path, and yet you still seek in the spiritual marketplace for different teachings and methodologies that promise to deliver sacred moments, then is it possible that you are like someone who has found her true partner but continues dating anyway?

Might you be more fulfilled if you settled down with your chosen “partner”—the Course—and really dedicated yourself to a committed relationship with it? Might this be a more effective way to meet your spiritual needs than dwelling *or* seeking?

PRACTICE-ORIENTED SPIRITUALITY

Practice-oriented spirituality combines the best elements of dwelling and seeking; it offers us a spiritual home *and* a spiritual journey. Wuthnow describes its essence this way:

To say that spirituality is practiced means that people engage intentionally in activities that deepen their relationship to the sacred. . . . In many cases, these activities are life-transforming, causing people to engage in service to others and to lead their lives in a worshipful manner. (169)

In practice-oriented spirituality, the spiritual life is rooted neither in belonging to a religious institution nor in exploring the spiritual marketplace. Instead, it is rooted in *practice*: regular, intentional activities meant to deepen our relationship with God. Wuthnow’s examples of such activities include prayer, meditation, contemplation, study of sacred texts, devotional reading, and service. These activities and others like them are the heart of the spiritual life.

Wuthnow fleshes out his picture of practice-oriented spirituality by describing some of its characteristics, based on the reports of people who are engaged in spiritual practice. Again, his account is richly detailed; the following is a brief summary.

Practice is intentional, disciplined, and long term.

Commitment to a regular practice

regimen is essential for deepening our relationship with God. As with any endeavor, practice makes perfect. Only when we apply ourselves in a disciplined way over time do we make real headway.

Practice involves self-reflection and discernment.

In practice-oriented spirituality, not everything goes. Not every impulse is God. In practice, we engage in careful self-examination in light of our deepening relationship with God. Through this, we learn how to distinguish the pull of God from the pull of other desires.

Practice is interlaced with daily life.

It is meant to penetrate every moment

Those who devote themselves to spiritual practice universally acclaim that “there is no better way to live”

of our day. The ultimate goal is a life of such consistency and integrity that “one’s practice of spirituality becomes indistinguishable from the rest of one’s life” (198).

Practice has a social dimension.

It is not usually a solitary journey, but rather is nourished by a relationship with a larger community of practitioners. Even those who practice alone benefit indirectly from the resources such communities offer. Practice support can come from peers, and also in the form of teacher-pupil relationships. Moreover, practice is often grounded in a particular tradition. Practice-oriented organizations can aid practitioners by offering both roots and wings: roots to ground them in a particular tradition, and wings to help them explore within the context of that tradition.

Practice is guided by rules.

If we want the benefits of the spiritual

life, there is practical value in having some rules, both for how to practice and how to treat other people. Appropriate rules are not arbitrary “authoritarian” impositions, but instead follow the principle that “doing X is necessary for achieving Y” (184): doing certain activities is necessary for achieving our spiritual goals.

Practice leads to a life of service.

The desire to serve others naturally flows from our relationship with God. As one practitioner says, “When you are deeply loved by God, you want to return it” (194). This service deepens our relationship with God and others, and helps us discover who we really are. As another practitioner who works with AIDS patients says, “It has given

me that sense that I’m a spiritual being—that every day, every moment I am connected with the creator” (195).

Practice is rewarding.

Those who devote themselves to spiritual practice universally acclaim that “there is no better way to live” (180). It delivers the priceless reward of deeper conscious contact with God—an experience of grace—and this strengthens motivation and commitment to practice.

The Course as practice-oriented spirituality

What amazes me is that the Course’s path embodies Wuthnow’s description of practice-oriented spirituality to a stunning degree. The Course is not just a treasure trove of fascinating ideas for spiritual seekers, but “an organized, well-structured and carefully planned program” (T-12.II.10:1) for spiritual *practitioners*.

This program consists of regular, intentional activities meant to deepen our relationship with God. This is meant to be the heart of the spiritual life for students of the Course.

At the Circle, we see three main activities in the Course's program: study, practice, and extension to others. All three fit Wuthnow's broader definition of the term "practice." Strikingly, all three are

The Course's path embodies Wuthnow's description of practice-oriented spirituality to a stunning degree.

included in his list of specific activities: study (study of sacred texts, devotional reading), practice (prayer, meditation, contemplation), and extension (service). Just as strikingly, the characteristics of practice-oriented spirituality all have strong parallels in the Course's path.

The Course's path is intentional, disciplined, and long term.

Commitment to a regular practice regimen—daily study of the teaching, Workbook-style practice, and extending miracles to others—is vital to the Course. Its whole program is geared toward providing "the long-range disciplinary training your mind needs" (W-pI.65.4:4). Only when we apply ourselves in a disciplined way over time will we find the peace, happiness, and salvation we seek (see W-pI.20.2).

The Course's path involves self-reflection and discernment.

The Course is clear that not every impulse is God. On the contrary, most of our impulses—even many that look "godly"—come straight from the ego. Therefore, Course practice involves careful self-examination in light of our deepening relationship with God. Through this, we learn how to distinguish the pull of God from the pull of the ego.

The Course's path is interlaced with daily life.

Course practice is meant to penetrate into every moment of our day. "It is meant to serve you in all ways, all times and places, and whenever you need help of any kind" (W-pI.rIII.In.11:5). The long-range goal is to become an advanced teacher of God, a person who embodies perfect consistency, integrity, and goodness in every aspect of her life.

The Course's path has a social dimension.

The Course never depicts the spiritual journey as solitary, but rather as a collaborative venture. While this is often overlooked, the Course does speak of students supporting one another on the path. It extols the benefits of two people joining in practice (see W-pI.183.5:4). Its author encouraged Helen and Bill to "take" the Course together. The Manual advocates a teacher-pupil relationship, in which a more experienced teacher mentors a less experienced pupil. All of this suggests the value of a community of practitioners committed to the Course's path—a commitment the Course certainly encourages. I believe Course-based organizations can facilitate this collaborative venture by providing the resources people need to walk the path together: the roots of grounding in the Course as a unique spiritual tradition, and the wings to explore all it has to offer.

The Course's path is guided by rules.

The benefits the Course promises are tied directly to following the rules it gives us, especially for its practice. It gives us rules for decision (T-30.I) and instructions for Workbook practice that we are urged to follow. It also provides rules (almost all of which are mental rules) for how to treat other people, even giving its own version of

the Golden Rule (see T-1.III.6). These rules all follow the principle that "doing X is necessary for achieving Y." "If you do it, you will see that it works" (T-9.V.9:2).

The Course's path leads to a life of service.

Service to others is the crowning glory of *A Course in Miracles*. We are told that the miracle "is the maximal service you can render to another" (T-1.I.18:2). Salvation is complete only when we give the love we have received from God to all the world. The loving service of extending miracles deepens our relationship with God and our brothers. Through this service, we finally recognize fully that we are spiritual beings, holy Sons of God who have never left our Creator.

The Course's path is rewarding.

I can't imagine a better way to live. The Course promises that following its program will bring us inner peace, radiant joy, freedom from all suffering, and ultimately awakening to our eternal heavenly home. I haven't experienced all that yet to be sure, but my practice *has* blessed me with far greater spiritual rewards than anything else I've tried. This has certainly strengthened my motivation and commitment to practice. My experience so far has given me hope that the Course really means it when it says, "Your practicing can offer everything to you" (W-pI.rIII.In.4:5).

Where do you stand in relation to practice-oriented spirituality?

In Wuthnow's view, "The ancient wisdom that emphasizes the idea of spiritual practices needs to be rediscovered" (16). The beauty of practice-oriented spirituality is that it combines dwelling and seeking: one could describe it as *seeking* for God within a particular *dwelling*—our practice. It thus incorporates the strengths of both, while minimizing their weaknesses. It provides the secure home of dwelling without the

imprisonment, *and* the freedom of seeking without the homelessness. It offers the best of both worlds.⁶

Think for a moment about where you stand in relation to practice-oriented spirituality. Consider the following questions:

- ◆ Does the picture presented above accurately describe how you see the Course?
- ◆ Is intentional, disciplined, long-term practice the heart of your spiritual life?
- ◆ When you consider taking on this kind of practice, is your reaction more positive, or negative?

If you are a typical Course student, I suspect your answers here were more on the negative side. If this is so, might it be because you have followed the social trend Wuthnow describes: the progression from dwelling to seeking? Is it possible that you have rejected dwelling and embraced seeking so thoroughly that you find it difficult to see the Course as a path of practice that includes elements of dwelling as well as seeking?

I think we Course students tend to view the Course through the lens of the “dwelling versus seeking” conflict. As a result, we’ve tended to emphasize the elements that look like seeking (the cool metaphysical ideas, the reversal of traditional Christianity, the freedom of choice, the inner focus, the honoring of other paths) and de-emphasize the elements that look like dwelling (the discipline, the rules, the social dimension, the focus on serving others, the long-term commitment to a single path). Our bias toward seeking has tended to obscure the fact that the Course is a practice-oriented spirituality that integrates seeking *and* dwelling. In my opinion, this has given us an incomplete view of the Course that has not allowed it to meet our spiritual needs as well as it could.

Unleashing the power of conscious commitment

In my mind, the great gift of practice-oriented spirituality is that it unleashes the power that comes from *conscious commitment* to a spiritual path. To bring back my earlier analogy, dedicating ourselves to a practice is the end of playing the field and the beginning of a fulfilling committed relationship with our chosen beloved.

To use another analogy, the journey to practice-oriented spirituality is something akin to the process of growing up. Dwelling-oriented spirituality represents *unconscious* commitment, the unquestioning acceptance characteristic of childhood. Seeking-oriented spirituality represents the *rejection* of commitment, the search for new experiences characteristic of adolescence and young adulthood. Both of these phases are valuable, even necessary: dwelling provides a secure nest for our formative years, and seeking enables us to leave the nest when we’re ready to fly. But practice-oriented spirituality is the pinnacle that lies even beyond the flight of seeking, because only here do we make a *conscious* commitment to a mature spiritual path. As Wuthnow puts it, “Spiritual practice takes this kind of seeking a step further, adding the vital element of sustained commitment, without which no life can have coherence” (198).

This sustained commitment enables our spiritual life to take off. The experience of generations has taught that only such commitment brings lasting success in any endeavor, spirituality included. This doesn’t mean our commitment to a particular path must be engraved in stone; the practice of self-reflection may well lead us to adjust our course at times. The point is simply that whatever path we choose, we will make real progress only to the degree that we dedicate ourselves to it heart and soul. The great masters of all traditions have known this. Show me a St. Francis or Mother Teresa or

Dalai Lama, and I’ll show you a person who has dedicated his or her life to practice. Practice-oriented spirituality is the “active ingredient” in all great spiritual paths, the engine that has powered their most advanced adherents to enlightenment.

Where are you, then, on the continuum from dwelling to seeking to practice? Wherever you are, there are gifts to be found there. But I believe that same powerful engine has been installed into the Course, and in the end, only embracing the Course as practice-oriented spirituality will truly deliver all the benefits it holds out to us. If the Course is your path, is it perhaps time to take the next step and unleash the power of conscious commitment in your life? ◆

1. Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), back cover.
2. Thus, while moving from one alternative to another may involve moving from one spiritual tradition to another, it doesn’t have to. A Christian, for example, could move from dwelling to seeking to practice without ever leaving Christianity.
3. This reference means “*After Heaven*, pp. 3-4.” For convenience, all references to *After Heaven* are indicated with page numbers in parentheses.
4. When I say “traditional religion,” I don’t mean that all established *religious traditions* (like Christianity, Buddhism, etc.) are dwelling-oriented. The point here is that for most ordinary people through most of history, the religious way regarded as “traditional” has been dwelling-oriented.
5. Seeking-oriented spirituality is not confined to the New Age, however. Indeed, a major bastion of seeking is conservative evangelical megachurches, which often describe themselves as “seeker churches.”
6. Of course, this assumes that we are reasonably mature practitioners. Since all of us have egos, practice-oriented spirituality has its potential pitfalls like anything else.



Greg Mackie has been a student of A Course in Miracles since 1991, and a teacher for the Circle of Atonement since 1999. In addition to writing his “Course Q & A” page on the Circle’s website, he has assisted in teaching Allen Watson’s weekly in-depth Course class in Portland, Oregon. Greg also writes regularly for the Circle’s newsletter, A Better Way. He sees his primary function as helping to develop a tradition of Course scholarship.

BY ALLEN WATSON

Living with Our Imperfections

How do we manage to live with our imperfections? As we grow spiritually, we become so aware of what true love is like, what forgiveness is, and how we “ought” to live that we grow increasingly aware that most of the time we don’t live up to what we know. How can we be comfortable with that? How long is it going to take until we learn to live consistently and wholly in the spirit? How can we avoid being discouraged and feeling guilty about our sluggish growth?

One key is found in Workbook Lesson 158, which talks of time as an illusion.

*Time but seems to go in one direction.
We but undertake a journey that is
over. . . . We but see the journey from the
point at which it ended, looking back on
it, imagining we make it once again;
reviewing mentally what has gone by.*

(W-pI.158.3:5-6; 4:5; my emphasis)

From God’s viewpoint *all* our lives are past lives, including this one! We are already whole and complete, already at the journey’s end. Imagine that this is so. Imagine that you already are perfected and resting in eternity. All of the struggle and pain is past.

And, resting there, you begin to “mentally review” your past lives, remembering all the foolish mistakes you made, how you forgot who you were, how you thought—or dreamed—that you were separate, alone, weak and frightened. The memories of the dream seem so real! You take a deep breath, thankful that you are safe at Home. None of those terrors every really happened; all of it was a bad dream.

That picture, Jesus is saying, is the *exact truth*. All our present, negative experiences are just a mental review of a bad dream. Whenever we become aware of them, we can laugh at their foolishness. They mean nothing. “This isn’t the truth,” we can say. “This is *not* who I am. I am the holy Son of God, now only remembering this lifetime.”

We can observe ourselves almost objectively: “Okay, now he’s experiencing fear. Now depression. He’s being nasty to the bus driver because he doesn’t see the driver is really himself in another form, another actor, another part in the play *he* wrote.”

Changing your mind about who you really are, beginning to break the link of identification with *this* body, *this* ego, is the key. Changing your mind about who you are comes before any behavioral changes. Indeed, changing the behavior almost does not matter! The behavior is just part of the dream. As Marianne Williamson says so aptly about our past, “You are not your resumé.”

The actions to which we attach so much importance are just projections of mistaken thoughts about ourselves. They prove nothing. They change nothing. They are inadmissible evidence in God’s court.

He judges us worthy, not because of what we do, but because of who we are. He sees us as He created us. When we judge ourselves as undeserving of His love we are questioning God’s judgment and valuing our own judgment above His. And that is simply foolish, isn’t it?

Only the mind is capable of error. The body can act wrongly only when it is responding to misthought. (T-2.IV.2:4-5)

Therefore, behavior, or an action of the body, is meaningless. It is the mind that has erred and must be corrected. All correction is at the level of the mind (see T-2.V.1:7).

All we are responsible for is the way we think, not the way we act.

You may believe that you are responsible for what you do, but not for what you think. The truth is that you are responsible for what you think, because it is only at this level that you can exercise choice. What you do comes from what you think. (T-2.VI.2:5-7)

And behavior is “controlled by me automatically as soon as you place what you think under my guidance” (T-2.VI.2:9).

You must change your mind, not your behavior. (T-2.VI.3:4)

One of the root thoughts we have is that we create ourselves. We see our actions, or those of others, and mistake them as real. We think our actions prove something about us, or about others; that somehow they change what we are. God says they don’t. They prove nothing.

God created me, and what He created me to be, I am. Nothing I *do* can affect that! My misdeeds are just foolish mistakes based on forgetting the truth about myself, and they change nothing about who I really am. Nothing I *think* can affect that, either. Truth doesn’t change just because I forget it!

In this race, we start at the finish line. We are perfect already because God created us that way, and every mistaken action we perform is only the result of forgetting that fact. Therefore, *the only appropriate response to “failure” is to remember again who we are, remember God’s evaluation of us, and give thanks for the lesson.*

Sometimes this kind of thinking terrifies us. We think, “If I don’t condemn my sins, I’ll never change them. If I don’t condemn *their* sins, *they* will never change them.” The fact is that when any one of us remembers his true Self, accepts his own holiness, and acknowledges his perfect oneness with God, his or her behavior is automatically adjusted. Because all negative behavior arises *only* when our mind refuses to believe the truth about us. When we are conscious of who we really are, we cannot misbehave.

There is nothing to fear. ♦



Allen Watson is the author of many books on the Course, including the hugely popular Workbook Companion series. He is an internationally recognized speaker and teacher.



On May 28, 2004, the copyright on *A Course in Miracles* passed away for good. That was the last day that the Foundation for *A Course in Miracles* (FACIM) could appeal the judgment by Judge Robert Sweet, signed on April 27, which voided the copyright. *A Course in Miracles* will now be forever without copyright. To put that more accurately, the First Edition of the Course will be forever without copyright. FACIM still holds the copyright on the Second Edition, the numbered edition. However, since virtually all of the words in the Second Edition are also in the First Edition, what FACIM owns is primarily the numbering system, not the words. Those words can be used by anyone, in any way.

The judge did not release the earlier versions of the Course—the Hugh Lynn Cayce version, the Urtext, and Helen Schucman’s shorthand notebooks—from copyright. He decided that they were not a part of the Course’s copyright. Both sides have told me that this matter is now closed. As a final step, Endeavor is now proceeding with the attempt to void the trademark/servicemark on the name “A Course in Miracles” and the acronym “ACIM.”

It has taken so long to reach this moment that it may be difficult to fully appreciate it. It has been twelve years since—following the publication of Marianne Williamson’s *A Return to Love*—

AND NOW IT BELONGS TO THE WORLD

BY ROBERT PERRY

the copyright holder of the Course first began to limit the ability of authors to quote from the Course. Things got extremely tight in 1999, when FACIM was given the copyright and threatening letters were sent to a number of Course centers, churches, and Internet discussion groups. At that time, a real pall fell over the Course community as several lawsuits, and a lot of acrimony, sprang up.

That pall has taken its toll. Authors have been afraid to quote from the Course, students have felt disillusioned, and the Course has understandably been somewhat in decline in the world, or so it appears. Study group numbers are down from their high several years ago, there are fewer centers and newsletters, there have been no bestselling books based on the Course in a long time, and the conventional wisdom in the publishing industry is that *A Course in Miracles* is yesterday’s news. Now when I mention the Course to people, I sometimes hear, “Oh yeah, wasn’t that popular about ten years ago?”

But now that pall has been lifted. People are free to use the words of the Course however they see fit. Bestselling authors such as Marianne Williamson can quote from the Course as much as they want. Collections of Course passages, like the *Gifts from ‘A Course in Miracles’* series by Roger Walsh and Frances Vaughan, can be created again. Course commentators can quote extensively in their works; indeed, new commentators may step forward. Songwriters can publish songs which put the Course’s words to music. Internet discussion groups can quote freely without fear of being shut down.

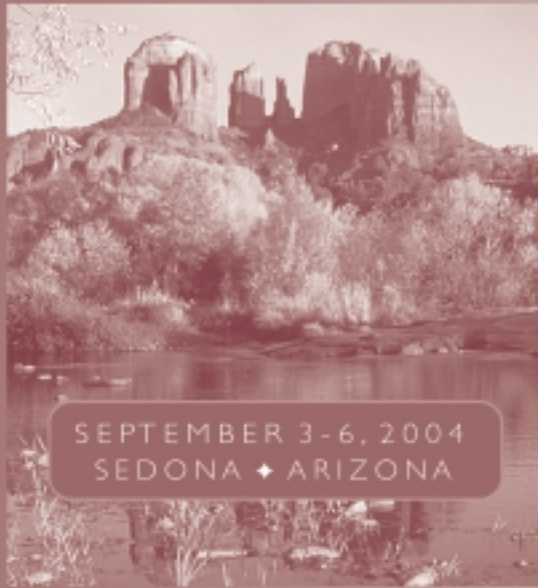
This freedom, however, does have a downside. Since anyone can now publish the Course, we may soon have new versions

of the Course in which wording has been freely altered to accommodate the publisher’s sensibilities. Many are concerned that chaos will result, as the public becomes confused about exactly what *A Course in Miracles* really is.

The question, therefore, naturally arises: Is this freedom a good thing? In the rest of this article, I would like to offer my own views on this. Personally, I feel that the ideal would have been for the Course to be under copyright, but with that copyright held in a generous and liberal way, as it was from 1976 until 1992. However, given that that was not going to happen, I do think that complete freedom from copyright is best. Yes, I expect abuses of one sort or another, but I would rather that the Course be free, and that we as a community try to deal with abuses when they come up, than it continue to labor under restrictions.

Three stories have shaped my sense about this. The first is the story of *It’s a Wonderful Life*, the classic Frank Capra movie starring Jimmy Stewart. When it debuted in 1946 it was not a huge hit with either audiences or critics, and afterwards slipped quickly into obscurity. What transformed it into the Christmas classic it has become was *the expiration of its copyright* in 1973. Because of this, any television station could show it for free, as often as it wanted, and so the movie started to play constantly between Thanksgiving and Christmas. People began recognizing what a remarkable film it was. Many made it a family tradition to watch it each year. Critics revisited it and decided it was one of the best films ever made. It soon became the staple of American holiday culture that it is today. The downside to this was that the movie was colorized, something which both Capra and Stewart strongly objected to

WALKING THE PATH OF LIGHT



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"Walking the Path of Light" is based on Robert Perry's new book, *Path of Light*, which is an enlightening, step-by-step guide to the spiritual masterpiece that is the Course. The retreat will offer participants an experience of the Course as not just a book of teachings, but as a complete and practical path leading us home to God.

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but which neither could stop. In my mind, however, this was a small price to pay for *It's a Wonderful Life* being lifted from obscurity into one of the most beloved and acclaimed films of all time. I think something similar could happen with the Course—the voiding of its copyright could lead to it becoming far more acknowledged and respected than ever before.

The second is the story of the scribing and publication of *A Course in Miracles*, a story which contains striking parallels with the Course's copyright saga. The Course's original custodians were sincere but fallible human beings who didn't grasp the true nature of the story they were part of. They didn't believe the Course was meant for a wider audience, and so they kept it under a cloak of secrecy, locked up in their closet, so to speak. Yet it was not destined to remain there. It was as if the Course's unseen author would not let it be contained, and worked from behind the scenes to liberate the Course from their closet and give it to the world.

It is not hard to see that history has

repeated itself. For those who believe the Course was written by Jesus, it is not a stretch to assume that he has done it again, that he has liberated the Course from yet another closet, in service of his larger designs for it. If so, he used an unlikely vehicle: Endeavor Academy, which has always been a controversial organization, both in Course circles and beyond. Yet Jesus has a penchant for using unlikely vehicles, as the story of the Course amply attests. Whatever else one may think of Endeavor, in this matter we all, I believe, owe them a debt of gratitude.

The third is the story of Jesus, not the story of his life but the story of his influence on Western culture. In *Jesus Through the Centuries*, Jaroslav Pelikan charts the many ways in which different eras have viewed Jesus. One of Pelikan's more interesting conclusions is that as the power of the Church began to wane after the Middle Ages, respect for Jesus actually grew. Each ensuing secular age found in him an exemplar of its highest values. It was as if the walls of the Church were too

confining for Jesus, as if he had something to give the world that was so big that it could only be given once he had been liberated from those walls. Pelikan concludes the book with these stirring words:

The later chapters of this book show that as respect for the organized church has declined, reverence for Jesus has grown. For the unity and variety of the portraits of "Jesus through the centuries" has demonstrated that there is more in him than is dreamt of in the philosophy and Christology of the theologians. Within the church, but also far beyond its walls, his person and message are, in the phrase of Augustine, a "beauty ever ancient, ever new."

Pelikan then closes with a line that sounds as if it was written for the current situation:

And now he belongs to the world. ♦

What Does It Mean to Be a Teacher of God?

BY ROBERT PERRY

There is so much confusion around the term “teacher of God” among students of *A Course in Miracles*. In what follows, I answer a series of questions about the teacher of God in an attempt to clarify this puzzling issue.

Is everyone a teacher?

The Manual’s attitude is that everyone is a teacher, but that the vast majority of people are teachers of the world’s curriculum, teachers of the *ego*. Percentage-wise “only very few” (M–12.3:3) are teachers of *God*.

Does the Course speak of me being your teacher because I push your buttons?

This is a very popular idea among Course students and spiritual students in general—that I am your teacher because my ego causes your ego to flare up, which then allows you to see your ego so that you can let it go. However, out of the 337 references to “teacher” and “teachers” in the Course, not one of them refers to this notion of teacher.

What does it mean to be a teacher?

All of the references to “teacher” in the Course—whether they refer to the Holy Spirit, to the ego, or to one of us—have in common a single notion: a teacher teaches *the thought system that he himself believes in*

to those who are willing to learn from him. Teaching, in other words, is the act of instilling your thought system in others. This means that if I am pushing your buttons with my ego, then what I am teaching you is the thought system of my ego. That is being a teacher, but not a teacher of *God*.

teach—with our thoughts, words, and deeds—God’s thought system. In other words, we become a teacher of God when we have reached a certain place on the spiritual ladder. “Generic” teachers of God—all teachers of God, including those who teach paths other than the Course—reach this place when they are able to make

If I am pushing your buttons with my ego, then what I am teaching you is the thought system of my ego.

How do we teach—with our words or our actions or our thoughts?

We teach with all three, of course. But what really does the teaching is the thought system behind our words, actions, and thoughts. The Manual says that the real content that you are teaching is “what you think you are, and what you believe the relationship of others is to you” (M–In.3:1). For this reason, our words only become truly effective teaching devices for God when they are backed up by our life, when “we exemplify the words in us” (W–pII.14.2:5).

When do we qualify to be a teacher of God?

The Manual’s comments on this add up to the following idea: We become a teacher of God only when we are ready to truly

a single deliberate choice in which they do not see their interests as separate from the interests of another person (see M–1.1:2). This is not a choice people make every day. If you look at the lives of Helen and Bill, they made that choice when they joined in search of a better way. That single moment changed their lives.

For teachers of God within the framework of *A Course in Miracles*, my interpretation is that the beginning teacher of God is someone who has completed “the Course proper,” meaning the Course up until the Manual for Teachers. This means that the Course teacher of God is someone who has a) studied the Text all the way through and b) completed the Workbook to the point where he or she can practice morning, evening, and throughout the day *without the support of the Workbook* (this is clearly indicated in M–16.3–10). How many students of the Course have truly studied

the Text and completed the Workbook to the point where they can continue the practice taught them by the Workbook without its support? Not many—less than one percent of the total population of Course students, I'd say. That's how many beginning teachers of God there are within the framework of this course.

Are we all teachers and students to each other?

It is a very popular idea among Course students that we are all equally qualified to teach and that in each relationship we are both teacher and student. However, the Course never says this, and what it does say is not compatible with this. There is an important statement in the Manual that says, "Only time divides teacher and pupil" (M-29.1:4). That brief statement says a lot. It means that the pupil will one day be a teacher, but *is not a teacher now*. Only time divides teacher and pupil, but time *does divide them*. Pupil, teacher, and advanced teacher are different rungs on the spiritual ladder, a ladder we climb over time. The ladder is illusion, so that in our true nature nothing divides teacher and pupil. But within this world, on that ladder, one becomes first a pupil, then a teacher of God, then an advanced teacher of God, and then steps off the ladder entirely to become a Teacher of teachers.

What is an advanced teacher of God?

The advanced teacher of God is such a highly evolved being that we have probably never met such a person. If you read sensitively and carefully Section 4 of the Manual, which details the characteristics of the advanced teacher of God, then you will see what I mean. This is from something I wrote recently about the person described by those ten characteristics:

Imagine what it would be like to be around such a person. He trusts you. He always tells you the truth, for he has no image to protect. He is supremely tolerant of you; no matter how you behave, he considers you his dear friend. He is always gentle, never harsh. He simply doesn't get defensive, regardless of what you say. He is uncommonly generous; he notices your needs and gives freely, even lavishly, to meet them. Even when you are impatient with yourself, his patience with you knows no bounds. And whatever mistakes you make, he forgives you, for he realizes that any perception of his that you are not perfectly holy must be his own mistake, which he gladly gives over to the Holy Spirit.

The advanced teacher of God has an absolutely impeccable life, a life that is virtually a pure manifestation of the Course's principles. I think it is safe to say that the vast majority of people held up as the world's great spiritual lights are not advanced teachers. If you think of how many Eastern masters have fallen from grace due to one sort of scandal or another, you can probably see what I mean. The advanced teacher is an extremely rare being.

Conclusion

All of the answers above add up to a single picture: There is a ladder of

development on which we gradually progress from a person pursuing a normal egoic life, to a spiritual pupil, to a beginning teacher of God, to an advanced teacher of God, to a Teacher of teachers (who has transcended bodily existence altogether). At each point along the way, the percentage of people at that stage sharply diminishes. Yet, the author of the Course has faith that we will continue to climb that ladder, reaching higher and higher and higher. On the way up that ladder, it will do us no good to claim to be higher than we are—a massive temptation along the spiritual path. That just slows our progress. It just lures us into complacency. It amounts to trading in real development for the hollow pleasure of boasting. But we do have it within us to reach the very top, to become a person of pure and uncommon goodness, a shining light to everyone we meet. The author of the Course has perfect faith that one day we will reach that place, and then jump off the ladder altogether. It is only a matter of time. ♦



Robert Perry has authored, or co-authored with Allen Watson, nineteen books on A Course in Miracles. He is an internationally recognized authority on the Course, and has traveled extensively.

For Your Consideration

In recent years, we have been blessed with bequests from people remembering us in their wills, and this has benefited us tremendously. We had no idea how helpful it could be until we started receiving those bequests.

As you plan for your estate, we invite you to consider naming the Circle of Atonement as a beneficiary. If you decide to do this, please know that you have our deepest gratitude. If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact us (see our contact details on page 3). Thank you.

BY ROBERT PERRY

“Course-Sanctioned” Excuses to Not Practice the Lessons

Why is it that we so often miss the practice periods the Workbook asks us to do? In my experience, many of us will answer this question with spiritual-sounding answers, such as “I am staying in the present with the Holy Spirit rather than chaining myself to a clock.” Perhaps the most often-quoted “spiritual” reason for not practicing is “The whole point of the Workbook is to screw it up and forgive yourself.” Such statements make it sound as if, by not doing the Workbook practice, you are in a deeper sense truly doing *the Course*.

These sentiments have long struck me as out of accord with the Workbook’s own statements about missed practice periods. Recently, however, I discovered two places in the Workbook that specifically address this phenomenon of our inventing Course-sanctioned excuses to not practice.

The first is in Lesson 9. This is one of those early lessons where we look around the room and apply the idea to anything our eyes alight on. The lesson urges us not to aim for “complete inclusion” of everything in the room, yet at the same time to avoid “specific exclusion” of objects we resist applying the lesson to (W-pI.9.5:1). It then says:

Be sure you are honest with yourself in making this distinction. You may be tempted to obscure it.

(W-pI.9.5:2–3)

In other words, we might want to blur the distinction between *avoiding* complete inclusion and *engaging in* specific exclusion. To understand this, let’s say that there is a photo of our mother on the wall and we choose not to apply the lesson to it. The real reason we chose this was because we didn’t want to challenge certain ego

perceptions we have, but then we told ourselves, “Well, the Course did say to not try to include everything.” This is what it means to engage in specific exclusion in the name of not trying for complete inclusion. We didn’t practice due to our ego’s resistance, but then we rationalized that we didn’t practice because of some Course-sanctioned excuse.

The same pattern crops up a hundred lessons later in Review III. There, the Course tells us that when circumstances really do not permit, we shouldn’t try to do our practice on the hour. It even says that our spiritual progress will not be hurt by missing that practice period. But then it talks about another kind of situation, where we really could do our hourly practice, but don’t feel like giving the time to it. Missing that practice period, we are told, will impede our spiritual progress. Then comes this important counsel:

Do not deceive yourself in this....Learn to distinguish situations that are poorly suited to your practicing from those that you establish to uphold a camouflage for your unwillingness.

(W-pI.rIII.In.3:2, 4)

In this case, you just don’t want to do the practice period. You’d rather spend your time doing something else. But then you tell yourself that you are not practicing because you are too busy, or you are in conversation. And since the Course has told you that you don’t have to practice under those circumstances, you are claiming that your lack of practicing falls under a Course-sanctioned excuse.

These two passages are amazingly parallel. Both have in common the following scenario:

- ◆ There are two categories: 1) not practicing due to unwillingness and 2) not practicing because in this particular case the Course excuses you.
- ◆ You need to carefully and honestly distinguish between these categories.
- ◆ Instead, however, you tell yourself that an example of category #1 (not practicing due to unwillingness) is really an example of category #2 (not practicing because in this particular case the Course excuses you).
- ◆ In doing so, you are being dishonest with yourself.
- ◆ You are hiding your unwillingness behind a facade of legitimacy.

It is amazing just how parallel the two passages are, isn’t it? It is also amazing just how well the author of the Course knows us. We do not fool him for one minute. He sees right through our excuses. And while we are under the penetrating light of his calm gaze, perhaps we should be willing to look at ourselves with the same objectivity. Let us, then, ask ourselves: How much are we doing what he is talking about here? How much do we choose to not practice due to unwillingness, but then put some justifiable veneer on it? Have we even perhaps thrown a cloak of holiness around it? Have we made our lack of practicing a sign that we really “get it”?

Not practicing is not a sin. It will not make God angry with us. It will just deprive us of the benefits of practice. Thus, the more we can face our refusal to practice for what it is, the more we can remedy that refusal, and get back to experiencing those benefits. ◆

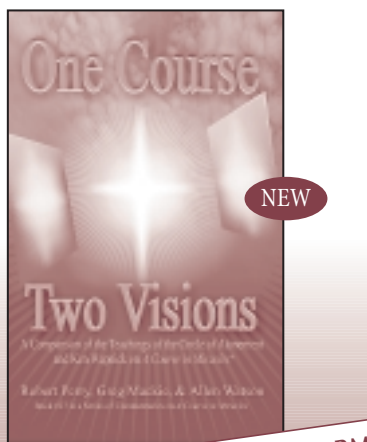
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A Course in Miracles has emerged within our lifetime as an authoritative spiritual text. Yet what does it really say? In the Course's brief history, two comprehensive visions have been offered, each by respected teachers and organizations, each based on many years of personal dedication and scholarly investigation. One vision comes from Ken Wapnick and the Foundation for *A Course in Miracles*. The other comes from Robert Perry and his colleagues at the Circle of Atonement.

One might assume that these visions would differ only in the details; yet in fact they diverge dramatically, leading to different ways of approaching, understanding, and living the Course. These differences have naturally led to confusion for Course students. The purpose of this book is to clear up that confusion. It addresses how the two visions relate to each other, delineating both their similarities and their differences. It then goes on to explore the key differences, and how they impact the Course student's life.

"Facilitators like myself are devoting much time to group study of this material. It is stirring much interest, but most importantly is a major clarification of Course study."

—Carl Banholzer

"I found your argument entirely logical and convincing. Thanks for having the guts to state your convictions."

—Ray Giddens

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Thank you for your letters to the Circle. We enjoy reading them and sharing them with our readers. These letters are on a variety of topics, and include your letters to the editor of *A Better Way*, and your comments on our services, programs, publications, and website. Write to us

at P.O. Box 4238, W. Sedona, AZ 86340, or send us an e-mail at info@circleofa.com. Letters may be edited for space or clarity.

I wanted to express my gratitude for a piece you [Nicola Harvey] wrote in *A Better Way* last year, “When Your Back Is Up Against the Wall” (Spring 2003). I returned to this article recently during a crisis period which had been building up for a number of months.

Towards the end of last year, I became aware that I was in the grip of something approaching paralysis. Apart from the fact that I was not moving ahead with the “form” problems I was facing, my daily practice started to break down. I didn’t know what was the matter, exactly. I *did* know that I was feeling more and more uncomfortable and even despairing about my interrelated problems and the daily Course practice I do. Somehow, it was as if I was doing nothing more than stuffing myself with words, like a turkey.

My mood grew increasingly grim. And then one day, there was a kind of soft click in the back of my brain, and I recalled your article from last spring. Going through it again, I felt an enormous relief. It was geared *exactly* to what I had been experiencing. I particularly appreciated what you said about our focus on *externals* during these periods of emotional turmoil, and the need to put our attention on the fundamentals of our spiritual orientation. What you said was dead-on accurate: I had indeed lost touch with those fundamentals. In my preoccupation with external circumstances and dilemmas, I had in

some way shut out a living voice that could sustain and nourish me.

The upshot is that I’ve gone back to the ACIM Text, trying to get a handle on it at a deeper level. And the experience has been exhilarating. The combination of your article and daily study of this material has broken up that dark mood. Each day I feel now that I *am* in touch with a living voice.

Monty Wiley
Seattle, WA



I just purchased your e-book delineating your differences with Ken Wapnick. I found your argument entirely logical and convincing. Thanks for having the guts to state your convictions. I’m afraid that I have been so influenced by Wapnick’s teachings (even though I have always believed them flawed) that I have confused what the Course taught me with what I learned from Wapnick. So thanks for helping me to remember and to distinguish.

Ray Giddens
Simpsonville, SC



I just visited your website today after searching for some answers in relation to Jesus of the Course and Jesus of the Bible....and voilà! There was Robert’s article

on “Who Was the Jesus of History?” All I can say is WOW!

Mary Butler
Sedona, AZ



Path of Light feedback:

I have just read *Path of Light*. Feels like you have met the need for a clear, accessible, non-daunting answer to the question: “What is *A Course in Miracles*?” I’m enormously grateful. Should any of my friends and acquaintance ever seek to understand more about the path I follow, I now know where to point them. And—making my gratitude deeper still—this is the book I will offer my children, at the appropriate time, should they express an interest in getting their minds round “that weird stuff you and Mum believe.”

Thank you, Robert, from the bottom of my heart.

Phil Brisk
Saddleworth, England



I received your book yesterday and I was up late last night reading it. You have done a masterful job, Robert. First, I like the cover and the looks of the print, the colour of the pages and its softness. The softness of the form carries on to the content as you beautifully describe this phenomenal path called *A Course in Miracles*. Your description of the beginnings of the Course made my eyes go misty, it was so beautifully done. You definitely wrote from your heart in each and every section. And along with your clear and sensitive explanations of some the toughest areas of the Course, you wrote with a sense of deep understanding and good humor.

I liked your explanations of the Course metaphysics and the creative illustrations,

my favorite being the masks of the ego. Your interpretations are backed up with sound and practical spiritual and psychological information. Finally, I love the way you ended the book with a call for all Course students to extend love, compassion and forgiveness to all brothers and sisters in our world.

Marianne Williamson was right on when she called this book a blessing! I am going to reread it many times.

Tom Gossett
Saltspring Island, BC Canada



Hi all—I just finished *Path of Light* and wanted to say: Great job, Robert! I think it's

a wonderfully clear presentation of the Course's major themes.

Danny Cavicchio
Sedona, AZ



This book is absolutely the best I have read regarding the Course, and gives the reader a much deeper vision of ACIM. It is a heart expanding experience to read and I agree with Marianne Williamson's comments. Thank you, Robert, for giving us this book.

Julie Bolwell
Burleigh Heads, Australia

CIRCLE SERVICES

Circle Website Our website is a wonderful resource for accessing Circle writings, and finding out about our events and services. You will find a huge variety of articles by Circle teachers, and new ones are added regularly. Other highly popular features well worth exploring are Robert Perry's Course Glossary, Allen Watson's Daily Workbook Commentaries and Greg Mackie's Course Q&A page. We have also just started publishing a small number of e-books, which are unavailable in print form. To ensure easy ordering of our books and tapes, we now have a shopping cart facility online. Visit our website at www.circleofa.com. We are dedicated to making this a rich and informative site that provides a wealth of materials in support of your journey with the Course.

Path of Light Workshops Robert Perry is available to run workshops based on his new book, *Path of Light*. If you would like to host a workshop in your area, please contact our office.

Support for Students and Study Groups Mary Anne Buchowski is available to work with individual Course students in a teacher-pupil relationship designed to help them along the path of the Course. We are also pleased to offer informal support, through correspondence or by phone, to both individuals or study groups. Contact Mary Anne at maryanne@circleofa.com.

Course-Based Spiritual Healing If you would like a healing session with Nicola, please contact her at nicola@circleofa.com.

Service to People in Prison The Circle provides complimentary materials, as well as support through correspondence, to Course students in prison.

CIRCLE EVENTS

REGULAR CLASSES / SEDONA, AZ

Daily Morning Workbook Class

With Mary Anne Buchowski
and Greg Mackie
Focus for 2004: "Awake and Share:
Bringing the Lessons to Life"
Weekdays, 8:30 - 9:30am

Weekly Evening Class

With Robert Perry
Deepen your understanding
of a variety of Course topics
Tuesdays, 7:00 - 8:30pm
Call our office for details

REGULAR CLASSES / PORTLAND, OR

Weekly Evening Class

With Allen Watson
In-depth study of the Text of
A Course in Miracles
Tuesdays, 7:00 - 9:00pm
Contact Allen Watson
allen@circleofa.com; (503) 284-3619

OTHER EVENTS

UK Tour

Path of Light With Robert Perry

2 - 8 July, 2004

Visiting London, Oxford, Worcester,
E. Grinstead, Bedford, Milton Keynes &
Bournemouth

Contact the Miracle Network for details:
(020) 7262-0209, or admin@miracles.org.uk

3-Day Residential Retreat

Walking the Path of Light With Robert Perry and Circle staff

3 - 6 September, 2004
(Labor Day Weekend),
Sedona, Arizona

Book by July 15th and save \$90 on
registration fee!

*Call our office at (928) 282-0790
or visit www.circleofa.com*

The Circle of Atonement Mission Statement

To discern the author's vision of *A Course in Miracles* and manifest that in our lives, in the lives of students, and in the world.

1. **To faithfully discern the author's vision of *A Course in Miracles*.** In interpreting the Course we strive for total fidelity to its words and the meanings they express. We thereby seek to discover the Course as the author saw it.
2. **To be an instrument in Jesus' plan to manifest his vision of the Course in the lives of students and in the world.** We consider this to be Jesus' organization and therefore we attempt to follow his guidance in all we do. Our goal is to help students understand, as well as discern for themselves, the Course's thought system as he intended—as a literal program in spiritual awakening. Through doing so we hope to help ground in the world the intended way of doing the Course, here at the beginning of its history.
3. **To help spark an enduring tradition based entirely on students joining together in doing the Course as the author envisioned.** We have a vision of local Course support systems composed of teachers, students, healers, and groups, all there to support one another in making full use of the Course. These support systems, as they continue and multiply, will together comprise an enduring spiritual tradition, dedicated solely to doing the Course as the author intended. Our goal is to help spark this tradition, and to assist others in doing the same.
4. **To become an embodiment, a birthplace of this enduring spiritual tradition.** To help spark this tradition we must first become a model for it ourselves. This requires that we at the Circle follow the Course as our individual path; that we ourselves learn forgiveness through its program. It requires that we join each other in a group holy relationship dedicated to the common goal of awakening through the Course. It also requires that we cultivate a local support system here in Sedona, and that we have a facility where others could join with us in learning this approach to the Course. Through all of this we hope to become a seed for an ongoing spiritual tradition based on *A Course in Miracles*.

Friends of the Circle

An Invitation to Join with Us

If you have benefited from the materials, programs, and services of the Circle of Atonement, and would like to help us fulfil our role with *A Course in Miracles*, we invite you to consider joining the Friends of the Circle. Over the years, the Friends' financial assistance, spiritual support, words of appreciation and encouragement, as well as the relationships we have developed, have brought us many blessings and much joy, and have been instrumental in our fulfilling our vision (see our mission statement opposite).

BENEFITS

In addition to offering you the opportunity to join with us in our vision, contribute to our work, and experience being an active part of our Circle family, your annual membership of \$180 includes:

- ◆ Four issues of our quarterly newsletter, *A Better Way*;
- ◆ 20% off Circle books, tapes, workshops and retreats;
- ◆ \$90 tax-deductible donation;
- ◆ Friends of the Circle updates, keeping you up to date with the life of the Circle;
- ◆ Support in your study, practice, and extension of the Course's teachings;
- ◆ Special materials from workshops and classes;
- ◆ Feedback forms for sharing your ideas and concerns.

TO JOIN

- ◆ Tell us about yourself and why you want to join the Friends;
- ◆ Take a few moments to silently join with us in purpose;
- ◆ Send us your initial contribution for a year (\$180) or for the first quarter (\$45).

You may join:

1. through our website (www.circleofa.com—“About the Circle”)
2. via e-mail to info@circleofa.com (please include your credit card type, number, and expiry date)
3. by regular mail; write us a letter and send it, with payment, to our office (address on page 3).

Donations above the annual membership fee are gratefully received, both for our general operating fund, as well as for special projects as they arise.